

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 10839

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ECON, EFIN, EG
SUBJ: BREAD PRICES AND AVAILABILITY

REF: CAIRO 9907

1. FURTHER MARKET CHECKS INDICATE OUR INFO ON PRICES, PARA 1 (REFTEL), MAY BE SOMEWHAT MISLEADING AND, THEREFORE, NEEDS AMPLIFICATION. SHAMI BREAD, ROLLS AND BAGUETTES CAN BE FOUND AT PRE-JANUARY 1977 PRICES IN CENTRAL PART OF CAIRO. SIZE OF 1 PIASTER ITEMS SOMEWHAT DIMINISHED, HOWEVER, AND 1-1/2 PIASTER ITEMS MORE EASILY OBTAINABLE BECAUSE BAKERIES PREFER TO PUSH MORE PROFITABLE SIZES.

2. MOST CRITICAL BREAD ITEM, ONE-HALF PIASTER BALADI, IS USUALLY AVAILABLE IN POORER URBAN AREAS OF CAIRO, NOTABLY BULAQ, AND EVEN SOMEWHAT MORE AFFLUENT SECTIONS OF BAB EL LOUK AND SHOUBRA. SIZE OF BALADI LOAF, TOO, CONTINUES TO BE CUT BY BAKERIES, WHICH NOW MOST COMMONLY OFFER 5-INCH DIAMETER PIECE OF BREAD AT THIS LOW PRICE. MOST RECENT ILLUSTRATION OF GOE'S CONCERN OVER SIZE OF BALADI LOAVES IS GUMHURRIYA REPORT APRIL 13 THAT MININTERIOR MOHAME
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NABAWI DISCOVERED BAKERS IN MIDDLE-CLASS DOKKI SECTION SHORTCHANGING CUSTOMERS BY USING LESS FLOUR IN LOAVES. MININTERIOR REPORTEDLY ORDERED BREAD SELLERS TO STOP OPERATION AND ASSURED THAT CUSTOMERS PRESENT RECEIVED ADDITIONAL BREAD FREE TO OFFSET SIZE/PRICE DIFFERENTIAL.

3. COMMENT: GOE IS, WITH REASON, HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO BREAD PRICE ISSUE AND THUS MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO ASSURE CERTAIN POPULARLY-PRICED TYPES ARE STILL AVAILABLE, PARTICULARLY IN LOW INCOME URBAN AREAS, DESPITE BREAD SELLERS' EFFORTS TO REDUCE SIZE AND AMOUNT OF FLOUR IN INDIVIDUAL LOAVES. EVEN THOUGH HIGHER PRICED LOAVES ARE MORE READILY AVAILABLE, GOE CAN STILL CLAIM MOST BREAD PRICES TECHNICALLY HAVE NOT CHANGED FROM PRE-JANUARY 1977 RIOT LEVELS. EILTS

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